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ABSTRACT

This Eleventh Annual Report on activities of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse begins with the goal, objectives, and scope and methodology of the Clearinghouse followed by a summary of the challenges against library materials that were reported and took place between July 1, 1998 and June 30, 1999. Details about each challenge reported by public libraries and school library media centers during the year are then presented alphabetically by title. A statistical snapshot of challenges reported to the Clearinghouse data since its inception in May 1987 is given, followed by a five-year overview of challenges to library materials in Oregon, based on data reported since July 1, 1994. Four charts analyze the data in this section. Other issues in intellectual freedom in Oregon in 1998-99 are then highlighted. (AEF)

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Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse. Twelfth Annual Report, July 1, 1998-June 30, 1999

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Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse
Twelfth Annual Report
July 1, 1998 – June 30, 1999

Goal of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

The goal of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse is to uphold the principles of the Library Bill of Rights in all types of libraries, by improving communication between librarians, board members, professional associations, and other concerned groups in Oregon about challenges to intellectual freedom, and by increasing awareness as to how threats to intellectual freedom can be overcome.

Objectives of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

To establish a central clearinghouse to collect and disseminate reports about challenges to intellectual freedom in all types of Oregon libraries.

To provide information about challenged materials to public library directors and library board members, school media center librarians and academic librarians when requests for reconsideration of materials are formally registered.

To provide information to public library directors and library board members, school media center librarians and academic librarians about establishing appropriate policies and procedures before a challenge to intellectual freedom occurs.

To cooperate with other persons and groups concerned with intellectual freedom or related issues.

Scope and Methodology of the Clearinghouse

The data collected is limited to formal challenges to any type of library material in any type of Oregon library. A formal challenge is defined here as a written "Request for Reconsideration" or "Statement of Concern" submitted by a group or individual to a library. The Clearinghouse will report informal (not written) challenges when such challenges are of interest because they have received significant public debate.

The Clearinghouse reports details about challenges as they are recorded on "Reconsideration Report" forms submitted by library or school staff, or occasionally by citizens. Additional information is obtained from newspaper reports, if available. In a few instances, newspaper articles are the sole source of information about a challenge.

The Twelfth Annual Report summarizes 17 challenges against library materials that took place between July 1, 1998 and June 30, 1999. The section, "Other Issues in Intellectual Freedom in Oregon in 1998-99," provides a brief synopsis of other issues concerning intellectual freedom that affect Oregon libraries. A five-

year overview of Clearinghouse data (see section, "The Charts") analyzes the data in a graphic format. "The Big Picture," provides a statistical snapshot of Clearinghouse data since its inception in May 1987.

It is possible to research challenges in Oregon libraries using either the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse Index to Challenges at the Oregon State Library website <http://www.osl.state.or.us/libdev/libdev.html> or the printed Annual Reports produced by the Clearinghouse. The Index to Challenges on the website or the printed Index to Challenges included in the 9th Annual Report will locate titles and the number of the Annual Report that includes the challenge. The Annual Reports themselves will yield more complete information, including a summary of objections. The website index is the source of the most current information in that challenges are added on a monthly basis. Beginning with the 9th Annual Report, 1995-96, the reports are posted on the Oregon State Library website http://www.osl.state.or.us/libdev/libdev.html. To obtain copies of Annual Reports prior to 1995-96, or in the print version, contact Val Vogt, Oregon State Library, at 503-378-2112, extension 222, or val.t.vogt@state.or.us.

Summary of Challenges Reported in 1998-99

The Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse received information about 17 challenges to library materials between July 1, 1998 and June 30, 1999. Eight of the challenged titles were books, seven were videotapes, one was an audiotape and one was a magazine. Public libraries experienced 16 of the challenges and school libraries experienced one challenge. Nine of the challenged items were designated as children's or young adult materials, and eight were materials for adults. In twelve of the challenges, library staff committees decided that the challenged materials should be retained. Two of the challenged items were reclassified for an older audience and one was restricted to students in middle school and above. Two of the titles were removed from the library because they were old and worn out.

Six challenges to material in 1998-99 concerned materials that were considered excessively violent or too scary for children. Concerns about material with sexual themes or overly graphic language were expressed in six requests for reconsideration. The five challenges reported in the "other" category encompassed concerns which ranged from racist stereotyping to inaccurate material to propaganda.

The challenges listed below are organized according to library type, public or school, and arranged alphabetically by the title of the challenged material. Under the summary of events, the phrase "Staff review process" refers to adopted procedures by which library staff read or view the materials, collect reviews and other information about the material, and make the decision about the challenged item. This procedure is more common in public libraries. Generally, the library director writes a letter informing the library patron of the decision and explaining the appeals process, in case the citizen is not satisfied with the decision. The phrase "Committee review process" refers to adopted procedures by which a committee, such as an Instructional Materials Review Committee, makes the

decision about the challenged item. This procedure is more common in schools. The school board, superintendent, or site council often make the final decision based on a recommendation from the committee.

Challenges in Public Libraries

African Odyssey (Adult Video)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about stoning/beating to death of wildebeest.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained 7/25/98. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Apache Knight by Carol Finch (Adult Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about book being overly erotic.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book (which would have been retained but was paperback in bad condition) was removed 1/19/99. Letter sent.

A Boat Named Death by Jack M. Bickham (Adult Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about violence in book.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 9/3/98. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

The Bones in the Cliff by James Stevenson (Children's Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about profanity and inappropriate subject matter for children.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 8/28/98. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Cold, Cold Heart by James Elliott (Adult Audiotape)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about sadistic violence in book.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Audiotape retained 9/3/98. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Dogs to the Rescue (Children's Video)
Summary of objections: Requested that library place warning stickers about violent content on videos for children or not have violent videos for kids at the library at all.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained without label 10/01/98. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Greening of Planet Earth (Adult Video)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the interest group that produced video is not identified on packaging and the video doesn't present alternate points of view.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained 3/3/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Hope and Glory (Adult Video)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about depiction of children preoccupied with sexual experiences.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained 5/5/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Mommy Laid an Egg by Babette Cole (Children's Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about trivialization of sex education for children.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 9/24/98. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Poisons Make You Sick by Dorothy Chlad (Children's Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about the possibility that information would mislead children about medications.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book (which would not normally have been removed but was in "terrible physical condition") was removed 12/8/98. Letter sent.

Porky Pig and Company (Children's Video)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about "racist stereotypes of Native Americans".
Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained 11/3/98. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Sex: It's Worth Waiting For by Greg Speck (Young Adult Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed that information in the book discriminated against gay youth.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 12/8/98. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Sunday's Children (Adult Video)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about violence and sexual content in the video.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained 4/27/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Tales of the City (Adult Video)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about graphic scenes of gays, sex, and drugs.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained 6/10/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

The Trokeville Way by Russell Hoban (Children's Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about sexual references and excessive swearing.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book reclassified as Young Adult 6/8/99. No further appeal filed.

WWF (World Wrestling Federation) Magazine (Young Adult Magazine)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about violence and sexual innuendoes. Request to move it from Young Adult area.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Magazine reclassified as Adult 4/8/99.

Challenges In School Library Media Centers

Alice in Rapture, Sort Of by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor (Children's Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed that tone too advanced for pre-teens.
Summary of events: Committee review process. School Board approved Committee recommendation. Book restricted to middle school or above 7/14/98. No further appeal filed.

The Big Picture: A Twelve Year Overview

The following is a statistical snapshot of the challenges reported since the inception of the Clearinghouse in May 1987. The total number of challenges was 417, of which 288 were in public libraries and 129 in school libraries. 262 of these challenges were to materials designated for children or young adults and 155 were for adult materials. Objections to the content of library materials fell into the following categories: scary or violent content, 70 challenges; graphic sexual content or explicit language, 161 challenges; witches or occult themes, 51 challenges; homosexual content, 60 challenges; and other concerns, 75 challenges. Library materials were retained in 359 of the challenges (86%) reclassified 12 times (3%); restricted 19 times (4%); replaced 3 times (1%); and removed 24 times (6%). Assistance with data organization and reviews about materials provided by Val Vogt and Craig Smith at the Oregon State Library.

In order to ensure sound data, we invite every library in Oregon to report all challenges to intellectual freedom. We have posted information about the Clearinghouse, the information request form, the reconsideration report form and other intellectual freedom resources on the Oregon State Library website at <http:/www.osl.state.or.us/libdev/libdev.html>. You may also contact Clearinghouse Coordinator, MaryKay Dahlgreen, at 503-378-2112 ext. 239 or <marykay.dahlgreen@state.or.us>.

The Charts: A Five-Year Overview

The following is an overview of the last five years of challenges to library materials in Oregon, based on the data reported since July 1, 1994.

FIGURE 1
Number of Challenges Reported:
By Type of Library

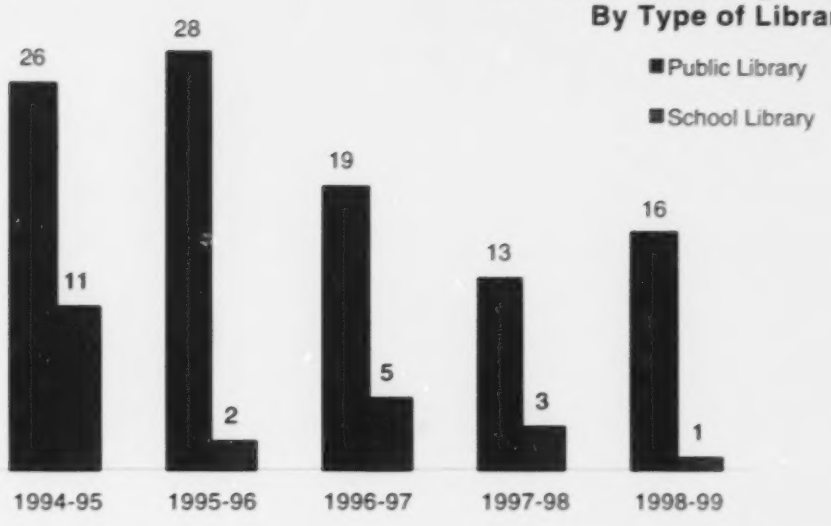

Figure 1 illustrates the number of challenges in public libraries and the number of challenges in school libraries. Over five years, the Clearinghouse collected information about 102 challenges to public library materials, and 22 challenges to school library materials. The past five years have seen a decrease in reported challenges to library materials.

FIGURE 2
Number of Challenges Reported:
By Age Designation

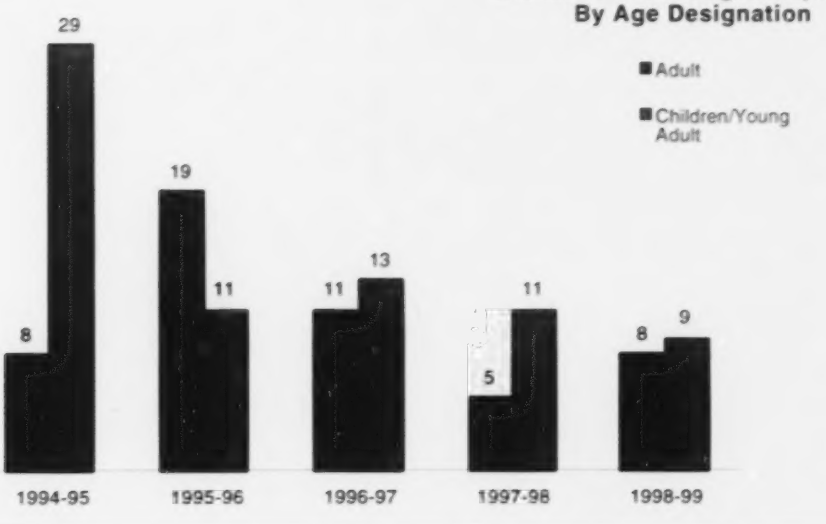

Figure 2 illustrates whether materials challenged each year were for children and young adults or for adults. Traditionally, citizens have challenged materials designated for children and young adults more than materials for adults. Although 1995-96 showed a marked increase in challenges to materials designated for adults, the traditional pattern of more youth materials challenges was re-established in 1996-97. Since 1994 there have been 73 challenges concerning materials for children and young adults and 51 concerning materials for adults.

FIGURE 3
Number of Challenges Reported:
By Type of Objection

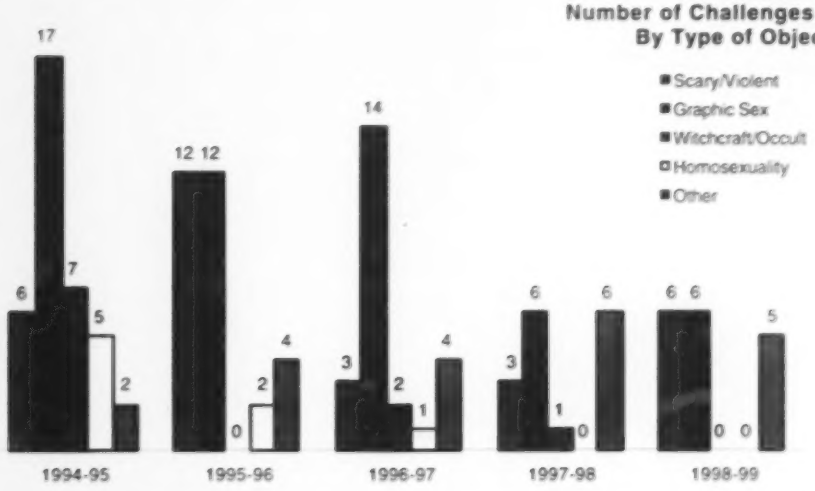

Figure 3 classifies the objections to materials submitted each year into broad categories. Often multiple objections are cited against materials but the chart illustrates only one major objection for each challenge. The chart indicates that while the category of challenges related to graphic sexual content or explicit language has typically been the category with the greatest number since the early years of the Clearinghouse, all the other categories of challenges have varied in number in recent years.

FIGURE 4
Number of Challenges Reported:
By Final Decision

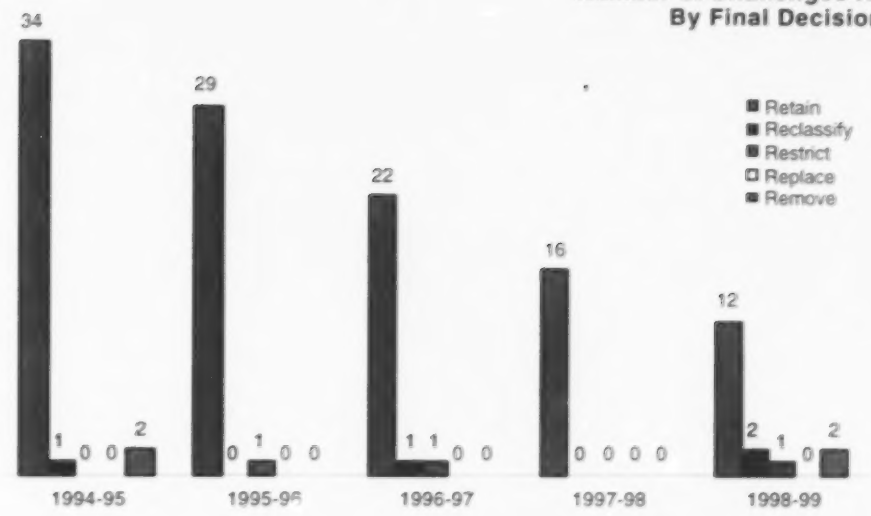

Figure 4 illustrates the final outcome of each challenge: whether the materials were retained without restriction in each library, reclassified to a different age group or subject section in the library, restricted to a certain age group or restricted to access only with parental permission, replaced with a similar item on the same subject or a new edition of the same title, or removed from the library. Over the years most materials have been retained on library shelves with no restriction.

Other Issues in Intellectual Freedom in Oregon in 1998-99

The Internet, and access to the Internet, continues to be the intellectual freedom focus of many communities in Oregon, as well as in other parts of the United States. In January 1999 the Oregon Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee surveyed the public libraries in the state to document how libraries are handling patron access to the Internet. The survey found that while policies are still evolving, "providing access to the Internet has created few problems for libraries while providing an important resource for Oregon citizens." Eighty nine percent of the 128 public libraries contacted provide Internet access to their patrons. Of those 114 libraries, 77% had formal Internet use policies in place. In addition to policies, 65% of the libraries surveyed offer Internet training opportunities to their patrons, both formally and informally. Of those libraries, 8% require patrons to take classes offered by the library before they are allowed access to the Internet. Only seven libraries reported complaints about inappropriate use. Most other comments focused on patrons wanting more terminals and faster connections. The survey report is available on the Oregon Library Association website at <http://olaweb.org/misc/ifcsurvey.shtml>.

Several libraries found themselves in the center of policy discussions about providing Internet access, or filtering Internet access this year. Each of those

communities followed a process to determine the level of Internet access that depended upon community input. Thus far, the libraries have been successful in reaching solutions that respond to local needs. There are currently several pieces of Federal legislation pending that would require filtering Internet access in order to receive federal library support. Legislation requiring filtering in libraries was also introduced in a number of states. Oregon may have been protected from the introduction of similar legislation by the evidence from the Oregon Library Association survey, and the high profile Internet access situations, that Oregon public libraries have already developed local policies and solutions for providing Internet access. On the national front an important case was decided in November 1998 in Loudoun County Virginia.
The conclusion of Judge Leonie Brinkema's ruling in Mainstream Loudoun v. Loudoun County Library U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Virginia, Case No. 97-2049-A on November 23, 1998 reads:
"Although defendant is under no obligation to provide Internet access to its patrons, it has chosen to do so and is therefore restricted by the First Amendment in the limitations it is allowed to place on patron access. Defendant has asserted a broad right to censor the expressive activity of the receipt and communication of information through the Internet with a Policy that (1) is not necessary to further any compelling government interest; (2) is not narrowly tailored; (3) restricts the access of adult patrons to protected material just because the material is unfit for minors; (4) provides inadequate standards for restricting access; and (5) provides inadequate procedural safeguards to ensure prompt judicial review. Such a Policy offends the guarantee of free speech in the First Amendment and is, therefore, unconstitutional."

The American Library Association has produced several items that can be of assistance to librarians developing Internet use policies. Several divisions of ALA (ALTA, ALSC and PLA) recently published Children and the Internet: Guidelines for Developing Public Library Policy. The Office for Intellectual Freedom has written Guidelines and Considerations for Developing a Public Library Internet Use Policy, available at <www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/internet.html> and the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee has developed a document containing frequently asked questions about Internet use policies, available at <http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/interfaq.html>.

Libraries are playing an important role in guiding parents and children to quality sites on the Internet. ALA provides 700+ Great Sites: Amazing, Spectacular, Mysterious, Colorful...
<http://www.ala.org/parentspage/greatsites/> and Teen Hoopla: An Internet Guide for Teens at <http://www.ala.org/teenhoopla/main.html>. The American Library Association is also a partner in GetNetWise <http://www.getnetwise.org>, a resource for families and caregivers to help kids have safe, educational, and entertaining online experiences. The site includes a glossary of Internet terms, a guide to online safety, directions for reporting online trouble, a directory of online safety tools, and great sites for kids to visit.

Because the Internet is a new and rapidly changing medium, the Clearinghouse would like to track Internet challenges in libraries. We are encouraging libraries to

communicate with us about concerns and challenges that you receive. Contact MaryKay Dahlgreen, Clearinghouse Coordinator, <marykay.dahlgreen@state.or.us> or 503-378-2112 ext. 239.

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